DEVELOPMENT OF A RESPONSE
TO
STATE OF MONTANA COMMENTS
ON THE
KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST PLAN AND DEIS

RECREATION USE PROJECTIONS

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INTRODUCTION:

One of the comments supplied by the State of Montana was the following:

> Recreation use projections for the KNF are based on the estimated population growth of Lincoln county -- a questionable basis for projecting increases in recreation. Recreation projections should be based on both Montana population trends and on non-resident visitor projections.

The recreation use projections developed for the DEIS used projections of Lincoln County population as a proxy for growth rates in recreation use. The premise is that the recreation use of residents will vary by the number of residents and that the number of residents will also be linked to the number of non-resident recreationists. On the latter point, we have assumed that since the number of non-resident recreationists is related to the number of jobs in the county (at least in the services sector) and the number of jobs is liked to population so the local population is linked to the non-resident recreation use.

This paper explores the approach the State suggests, using techniques similar to those used in the 1983 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (the most current) to project recreation use for the state as a whole.

THE STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN:

Chapter 3 of the Montana SCORP (1983) is entitled "Participation and Projected Demand". This chapter discusses the subject first in terms of non-resident recreation and then in terms of resident recreation.

Non-Resident: A 1979 study provided data describing the use patterns of non-residents. This study provides base numbers which are to be projected into the future. Another study, "The Flathead Basin: an Economic Assessment", was quoted as estimating a 60% increase in tourist related employment between 1980 and 2000 (3% per year). Since no other data was available the State chose to apply this projection statewide. We agree that, when no other data is available, it is appropriate to use what is available particularly when attaining better information is costly and time consuming. The results, however, must be interpreted on the basis of their origin. The Flathead Basin is not typical of the entire state of Montana. The Basin is unusual in that it has a National Park (Glacier), Flathead Lake, a major international ski resort and is on a heavily used highway corridor linking the U.S. and Canada. We can expect that, for the state as a whole, the estimate of a 3% per year growth rate is probably near a maximum.

Resident: For resident recreation use, the SCORP uses a procedure identical to that used for the Kootenai DEIS except that statewide adult populations rather than Lincoln County total populations were used. Overall, using statewide population projections probably has similar validity to using Lincoln County projections. There are pros and cons to either approach, but rather than analyzing the situation in those terms, the remainder of this report will compare the resulting recreation use projects developed for the DEIS with those developed as the state suggests.

RECREATION USE PROJECTIONS - STATE SUGGESTED APPROACH:

In order to have a basis for projection of non-resident and resident recreation use it is necessary to have a base year actual recreation use level that can be split between the two categories of users.

The data used in the DEIS follows:

CATEGORY	1984 USE LEVEL
Developed Recreation	296,700 RVD's
Roaded Recreation	435,300 RVD's
Semi-Primitive/Primitive	46,800 RVD's
Wilderness Recreation	18,000 RVD's
Semi-Primitive Motorized	76,500 RVD's
TOTAL:	873,300 RVD's

The SCORP provides 1979 non-resident and resident activity days by activity for the state as a whole. The ratio of non-resident to resident use levels in 1979 as reported in the SCORP will be used to split this base use level. Overall, the SCORP attributes 5,926,100 activity days to non-residents and 48,274,800 activity days to residents. Thus about 12% of the recreation use in 1979 was non-resident use. The Kootenai data can then be split as follows:

CATEGORY	1984 USE LEVEL	Non-Resident	Resident
Developed Recreation	296,700 RVD's	36,400	260,300
Roaded Recreation	435,300 RVD's	53,400	381,900
Semi-Primitive/Primitive	46,800 RVD's	5,700	41,100
Wilderness Recreation	18,000 RVD's	2,200	15,800
Semi-Primitive Motorized	76,500 RVD's	9,400	67,100
TOTAL:	873,300 RVD's	107,100	766,200

Non-Resident Projections: As noted above, the SCORP projected non-resident recreation use to increase at the rate of 3% per year. Thus, the non-resident use by decade by category for the KNF would be as follows:

NON-RESIDENT
RECREATION VISITOR DAYS (RVD'S) PER YEAR

DECADE	DEVELOPED	ROADED	SEMI-PRIM NM	WILDERNESS	SEMI-PRIM MOTOR
1	36,400	53,400	5,700	2,200	9,400
2	48,400	71,000	7,600	2,900	12,500
3	58,200	85,400	9,100	3,500	15,000
4	69,200	101,500	10,800	4,200	17,900
5	80,100	117,500	12,500	4,800	20,700

Resident Projections: The SCORP used projections of the adult state population to project resident recreation use. The population projections used were the following:

Year	Population (Adult)
1979	546,000
1990	605,000

This is a population increase of 10.8% over 12 years or 9% per decade. For display purposes, this percentage will be carried forward through the 5 decades analyzed in the plan (straight line). Note that the 9% per decade increase in population translates directly to a 9% increase per decade in resident recreation use under the assumptions used in the SCORP.

RESIDENT
RECREATION VISITOR DAYS (RVD'S) PER YEAR

DECADE	DEVELOPED	ROADED	SEMI-PRIM NM	WILDERNESS	SEMI-PRIM MOTOR
1	260,300	381,900	41,100	15,800	67,100
2	283,700	416,300	44,800	17,200	73,100
3	307,200	450,600	48,500	18,600	79,200
4	330,600	485,000	52,200	20,100	85,200
5	354,000	519,400	55,900	21,500	91,300

SCORP TECHNIQUE VS DEIS TECHNIQUE:

The results of the process for each method of prediction is displayed in the charts below and compared in the final chart:

SCORP METHOD
PROJECTED RECREATION USE (RVD/year)

DECADE	DEVELOPED	ROADED	SEMI-PRIM NM	WILDERNESS	SEMI-PRIM MOTOR
1	296,700	435,300	46,800	18,000	76,500
2	332,100	487,300	52,400	20,100	85,600
3	365,400	536,000	57,600	22,100	94,200
4	399,800	586,500	63,000	24,300	105,900
5	431,100	636,900	68,400	26,300	112,000

DEIS METHOD
PROJECTED RECREATION USE (RVD/year)

DECADE	DEVELOPED	ROADED	SEMI-PRIM NM	WILDERNESS	SEMI-PRIM MOTOR
1	296,700	435,300	46,800	18,000	76,500
2	325,000	478,000	51,000	20,000	84,000
3	354,000	521,000	56,000	22,000	91,000
4	385,000	566,000	61,000	23,000	99,000
5	417,000	614,000	66,000	25,000	107,000

TOTAL RECREATION USE BY METHOD

DECADE	DEIS	SCORP	% DIFFERENCE
1	873,000	873,000	0% (Same base data)
2	958,000	977,500	2%
3	1,044,000	1,075,300	3%
4	1,134,000	1,179,500	4%
5	1,229,000	1,274,700	4%

CONCLUSION:

While any projection of the sort performed here is subject to question, it can be seen that the assumptions suggested by the state do not materially affect the projections. We could argue that the 3% per year increase in non-resident recreation is excessive for this area since it was based upon predictions developed for the Flathead Basin. If, instead, a 1% increase were used the results would be essentially identical to those we achieved using the increase in Lincoln County population as an indicator.

RECOMMENDATION:

Projections of the future are inherently difficult. The exercise presented in this document shows that the assumptions the state would have us use are essentially equivalent to those we used in the DEIS. My recommendation is to continue with the estimates used in the DEIS as being as good as any others yet proposed.